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SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR OPERATIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE HAITI STABILIZATION INITIATIVE (HSI)

¶1. This is an action cable. Please see para 2.

Summary and Request for Operational Analysis

¶2. Action request: The U.S. Embassy to Haiti requests, through SOUTHCOM, that the Joint Center for Operational Analysis (JCOA) conduct an operational analysis aimed at documenting lessons learned and capturing best practices from HSI. The Haiti Stabilization Initiative (HSI) is a pilot project designed to test and demonstrate highly integrated civilian stabilization, funded by DOD Section 1207, and designed and implemented by elements of the U.S. State Department and USAID. HSI is focused on Cite Soleil, an area of metropolitan Port-au-Prince that was completely lost to Government of Haiti (GOH) control until reclaimed by MINUSTAH military operations at the beginning of 2007. While HSI is generally considered to be a success, many questions remain open in the areas of strategy, operations and tactics. This exercise would be important not only in understanding the true value of HSI, but also as a guide to the design of future efforts of this nature.

Background

¶3. Haiti is among the more unstable countries in the world, and is the current instability leader in the Western Hemisphere. The U.S. has had to intervene militarily twice in the last twenty years, followed both times by robust U.N. peacekeeping operations. Order and security are presently guaranteed by the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), which includes a multinational force of seven thousand troops led by the Brazilian military as well as approximately one thousand civilian police advisors.

¶4. HSI was designed in 2006 in the U.S. State Department's Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) as a civilian-led stabilization exercise using Department of Defense (DOD) funding under Section 1207 of the National Defense Appropriations Act of 2006. Originally conceived with a budget of over one hundred million dollars to address a number of violent and impoverished urban hotspots in Haiti, the emergent needs in post-conflict Lebanon reduced available funds to twenty million dollars. HSI was reconfigured to work in a single neighborhood, Cite Soleil, in the north-west corner of metropolitan Port-au-Prince.

¶5. This area has the highest name recognition of any of the hotspots in Haiti, and deservedly so. Heavily armed gangs drove the institutions of the State, including the Haitian National Police

(HNP), from the area in 2004, and had fortified it against all comers, turning it into a base for criminal activity, particularly kidnapping. By the end of 2006 fear of kidnapping had so paralyzed Haitian society that inaction was no longer politically feasible. With approval of the GOH, MINUSTAH troops of the Brazilian Battalion retook the area in a series of sharp urban firefights between December 2006 and February 2007.

¶16. The agreement between the USG and the GOH establishing HSI was signed in April 2007, and the project became operational in May. Under the leadership of three U.S. State Department Foreign Service Officers, HSI is organized into several segments. The Community Building, Infrastructure, and Justice segments are administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The Police segment is administered by the State Department's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) and the Strategic Communications segment by the Embassy's Public Diplomacy section. Adequate sums were set aside for administrative expenses which can be very high in Haiti.

¶17. HSI has now been operational for over a year, and approximately half of its budget expended. Cite Soleil is a much more normal area, albeit suffering from the usual Haitian ills of extreme poverty, poor services and weak state institutions, especially in the realm of police services and the justice chain.

Strategy

¶18. HSI was designed by S/CRS at the State Department in Washington DC in concert with elements of DOD, USAID, INL, and the Bureau of

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Western Hemisphere Affairs, Office of Caribbean Affairs (WHA/CAR) with input from all elements of the U.S. Mission to Haiti, including State's Political, Public Diplomacy, Regional Security (RSO) and Narcotics Affairs (NAS, the field component of INL) Sections as well as USAID. Informed by the book "The Quest for a Viable Peace," written by a number of principals in post-conflict Kosovo, HSI was conceived as a highly integrated "Whole of Government" effort. It would be very important to know -- with the benefit of present knowledge -- how well the designers of the project understood the facts on the ground as they existed at the time, how well they and their counterparts understood each other and were able to make clear and coordinated plans together and how well the original concepts and design of HSI held up under operational realities.

Operations

¶19. The project was designed in 2006 when Cite Soleil was fully controlled by heavily armed and well-organized criminal gangs. While some small scale assistance was reaching the ordinary residents of the area (albeit at the cost of some compromise with gang leaders) a project of the scale of HSI would not at that time have been possible. The military operations that opened the area to normal life and to government control and services were driven by political necessity and were not coordinated with the project. The project was set up by a series of TDYers from S/CRS through late winter 2006 and early spring of 2007. Permanently assigned leadership did not arrive until summer 2007, as part of the normal State Department transfer cycle. Office space was provided in a reconfigured conference room in the USAID building, the last remaining office space in secure USG buildings in Port-au-Prince. Haiti is an extremely difficult operational environment, both because of uncertain security (Cite Soleil remains a Red Zone, meaning that all travel by USG employees under Chief of Mission Authority requires prior approval by RSO and the use of armored cars and armed guards) and because of the extreme weakness of services and support in Haiti. It would be useful to know how these and other issues affected the setup of HSI, and how they impacted the operations of HSI and its implementing partners within the USG as well as the NGOs and businesses chosen to do project implementation.

Tactics

¶10. HSI is the only Section 1207 project that has a dedicated staff, intended to ensure flexibility and speed in implementation. In fact, given that neither S/CRS nor Section 1207 was the beneficiary of "notwithstanding" authority allowing accelerated contracting or grants, and that no HSI staffer had contracting or grants warrants, in practice a speedy roll out could only be accomplished by modifications to existing assistance cooperative agreements. Three national USAID projects, administered respectively by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), CHF (previously the Cooperative Housing Foundation) and the National Committee for State Courts (NCSC) had goals and organizational structures that were deemed compatible with HSI, and were used as the basis for HSI's Community Building, Infrastructure and Justice segments. Community Building was operational within weeks of the official beginning of HSI. Infrastructure and Justice were much slower off the mark, and the Police segment, requiring the formal contracting process and requests for proposals, slower still. It would be important to know how these issues affected the development and success of the project, and what timing and coordination issues were critical or benign to the success of the project. Further, HSI is only one of many actors in Haiti and has operational contact with a large number of those actors, including various GOH agencies, MINUSTAH, UNDP, IDB, World Bank, ICRC, other bilateral missions, the private sector and NGOs. It would be educational to know how HSI and other actors' efforts helped or hindered each other and what effect these coordination issues had on the success of the project.

¶11. Information needed to prepare an Operational Analysis of HSI would need to be gathered from the paper trail of the founding, setup and operations of HSI in DOD, State and USAID, along with interviews of and group sessions involving representative actors in the project at all points in its history. This information would need to be gathered in Washington, Miami (DOD's SOUTHCOM Headquarters) and Port-au-Prince.

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The Product

¶12. In the shortest term JCOA would brief its findings to the U.S. Ambassador to Haiti, SOUTHCOM, and interested USG parties in Washington DC to include DOD, State and USAID. A formal report would also be prepared, possibly in more than one version depending on the USG audience. Finally, a rigorous paper would be written for publication in a journal concerned with stability operations with as wide an audience as possible. HSI is -- at least to the present moment -- a success in that Cite Soleil is no longer a direct and immediate threat to the stability of Haiti and therefore to the Caribbean region, but it is extremely important to the future stability operations of the USG and its friends in the international community to know and disseminate the real causes for its success, what methods might be applicable to future stability operations and what improvements will be needed to ensure the success of future operations at the lowest costs.

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